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# American Anthropologist

NEW SERIES

VOL. 25

APRIL-JUNE, 1923

No. 2

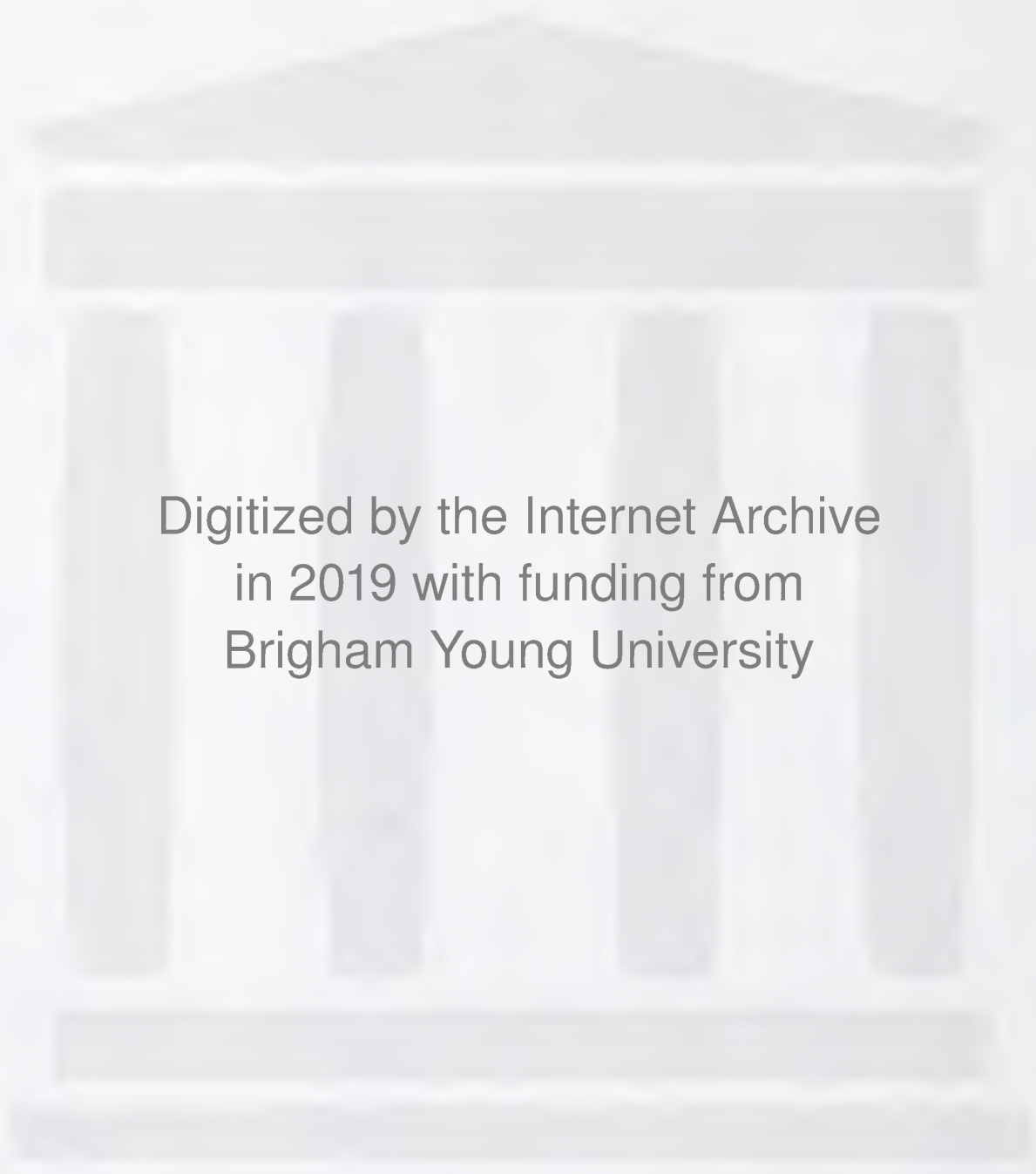
## THE HOVENWEEP NATIONAL MONUMENT

By J. WALTER FEWKES

SHORTLY before his departure for Florida the President issued a proclamation creating a new monument in southwestern Colorado and southeastern Utah. An event of this kind would seem to call for an account of its attractions or the salient features of the monument. Like several others, this reserve was created for the preservation of its antiquities which, although having the same general character as those of the adjacent Mesa Verde National Park, are somewhat different. The special kind of ruins characteristic of the Hovenweep monument are well preserved towers, similar to those which are found in the Mesa Verde National Park, and are most abundant and varied in the country west of that plateau far into Utah. Archaeologically speaking this monument supplements the Mesa Verde National Park and the structure of its towers and other buildings explains some of the enigmas of ruins in the park. As this new reservation was created to preserve its numerous towers a brief notice of a few buildings of the same type would be a fitting introduction to those of the new national monument. Fortunately the author's field work the past summer (1922) renders it possible to interpret some of the architectural features of the new monument.

There are several towers on the Mesa Verde that are like those of the new monument—a resemblance which shows that the prehistoric people of the Hovenweep resembled those of the Mesa Verde.

Three types of prehistoric towers are found in our Southwest: (1) square, circular, or semicircular towers without surrounding rooms; (2) towers accompanied with basal subterranean ceremo-



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nial rooms or kivas; (3) towers rising from pueblos or cliff dwellings. The first type of tower is generally mounted on top of a pinnacle of rock or on the rim of a canyon. The second type is situated on level ground or earth that allows excavation of basal kivas, and the third rises from a pueblo or cliff house in which there are both kivas and living rooms. The relatively greater abundance of the second type, or a tower with a basal ceremonial room and no dwellings, would seem to indicate that the tower was connected with ceremonies, and if this be true it also seems likely that when associated with a number of rooms, as in a large ruin like Cliff Palace, it preserved the same character.

As is well known several theories have been suggested to explain the function of southwestern towers. They have been regarded as observatories, forts, bins for the storage of grain, especially corn, and as enclosures for the performance of religious rites. There are indications that they were built by an agricultural people, one of the primal necessities of whom is to determine the time for planting. This can be obtained by observations of the sun's rising and setting, and a tower affords the elevation necessary for that purpose; hence the theory that southwestern towers were in part used for sun houses or observatories. A building from which the aboriginal priests determined calendric events by solar observations very naturally became a room for sun worship or for the worship of the power of the sky.

The presence of circular subterranean rooms, which almost always occur with towers, also indicates religious rites. As the tower may have been devoted to the worship of father sun or the sky god, in the underground kiva may have been celebrated the rites of mother earth. The rooms at the base of the tower in which kivas are embedded, in towers of the third type, indicate habitations and necessary granaries, as well as rooms for ceremonials. In support of the interpretation that some of these rooms are granaries, we find rows of vases in which corn is stored still standing in them.

Pipe Shrine House, on Mesa Verde, excavated by the author last summer, presents a good example of the third type for in it we have the tower, the sunken kiva, and the rectangular basal

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[N. S., 25, 1923]

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## THE HOVENWEEP NATIONAL MONUMENT

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rooms. The ceremonial character of this building is shown not only by the tower and kiva but also by many shrines in which formerly stood stone idols of the serpent, the mountain lion, the mountain sheep, or other objects of worship. On the northeast corner of the ruin near an enclosure there was found a stone slab on which the sun was depicted, indicating that this building may have been used for sun worship rites, and a coiled pictograph of a large serpent carved on the south wall likewise points to this worship. The evidence indicates that this building was constructed for rites and ceremonies of the sun and earth deities, and the tower and its accompanying subterranean room in cliff houses indicate that the ancient priests of Mesa Verde worshipped the two great nature principles, father sky and mother earth, which dominate the ritual of every agricultural people.

The new reservation called the Hovenweep<sup>1</sup> National Monument (Fig. 35), contains several towers in a much better state of preservation than any in the Mesa Verde, a condition which indicates that they were constructed later.

The ruined castles and towers of this monument are among the best preserved aboriginal buildings in the Southwest. The reservation (Fig. 36), includes three groups of ruins now called Square Tower, Hackberry, and Cool Spring House, on the Cajon Mesa, Utah.

One road to Hovenweep Monument passes through the McElmo Canyon which lies west of Cortez and Mancos, Colorado. There is also a good automobile road to this monument from Dolores. If the visitor uses the latter he avoids the Yellow Jacket, the bed of which is sometimes very sandy and often so swollen with water as to be impassable. If one uses the McElmo, having successfully crossed this stream, he follows the road which winds through Wickyup Canyon past two small towers situated on elevated buttes.

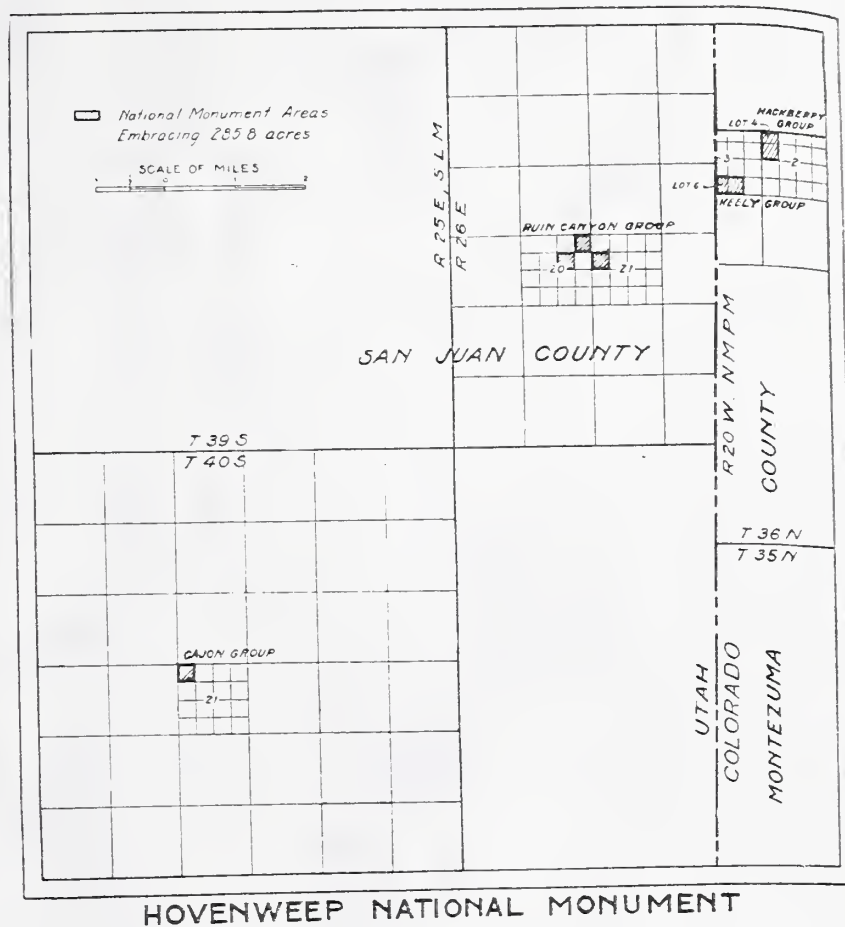
There are thirteen ruins in the Ruin Canyon group, over half of which are towers of the second type, which have kivas

<sup>1</sup> The name Hovenweep which has been given to this monument is taken from the Ute language and has been translated "Deserted Valley." It is now applied to a tributary of the Yellow Jacket, but was originally the name of the main canyon.





at their bases. One of the largest ruins is in Square Tower Canyon and stands at the head of the canyon, rising from the very rim. Although sections of the walls of this building have fallen, the remains of a large semicircular house are conspicuous

FIG. 35<sup>2</sup>

for some distance. This ruin also has buried kivas surrounded by square or rectangular rooms. In the midst of walls there formerly rose a conspicuous multi-chambered tower, whose foundation is D-shaped, its straight wall measuring 23 and the

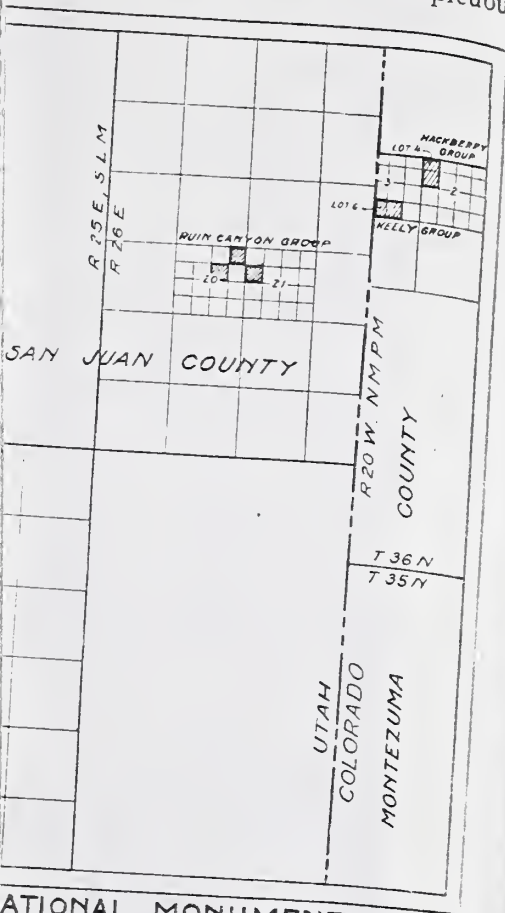
<sup>2</sup> Reproduced by courtesy of the National Park Service, Stephen T. Mather, Director.

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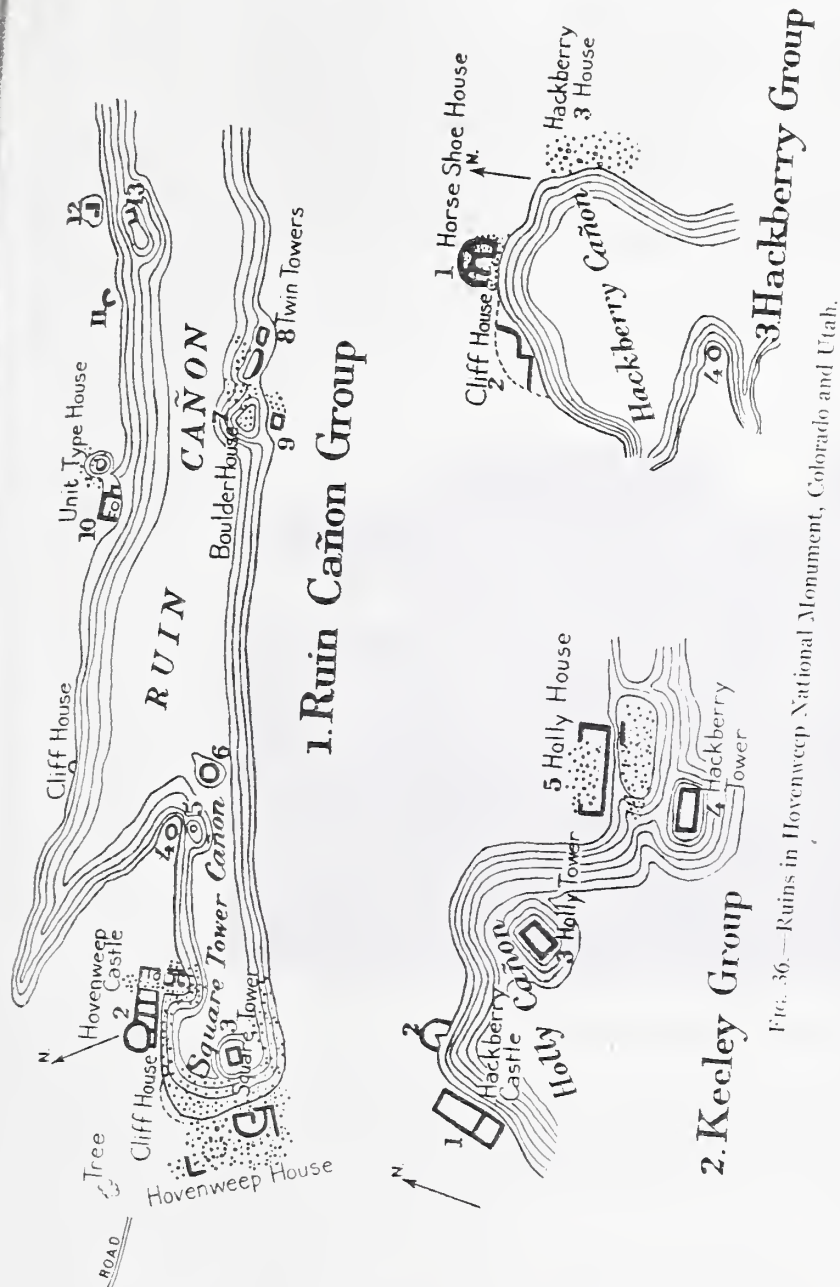


FIG. 36.—Ruins in Hovenweep National Monument, Colorado and Utah.





curved 56 feet. The northeast corner rises 15 feet high, and the walls of the northwest angle of the ruin are still higher. This ruin, called Hovenweep House, resembled somewhat Far View House on the Mesa Verde National Park.

The best preserved building (Fig. 37), in the Hovenweep National Monument, called Hovenweep Castle, is divided into two sections, western and southern, imparting to the ground plan

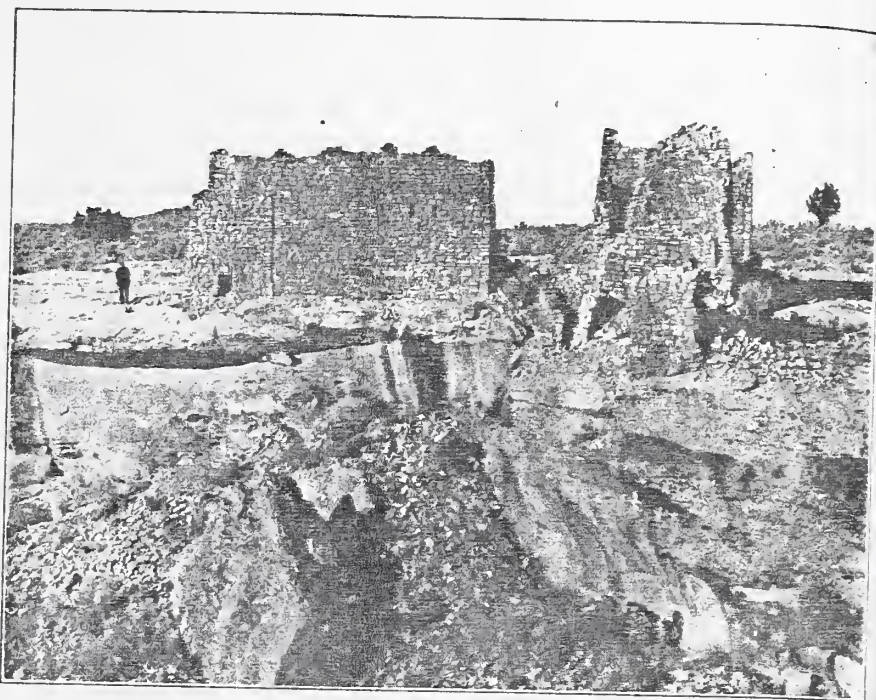


FIG. 37.—Hovenweep Castle, Ruin Canyon group, Hovenweep National Monument.

of the ruin the shape of the letter L. It has towers and kivas arranged about rectangular rooms; and the western end is composed of a massive-walled semicircular tower and well preserved rooms with high walls.

The eastern section, like the western, has a tower and circular depressions or kivas. On the north and south ends the eastern section rises into high walls enclosing rectangular rooms, those at the north end being better constructed, and standing as high





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tern, has a tower and circular n and south ends the eastern ing rectangular rooms, those ructed, and standing as high

as the walls of the western tower. The corners of these buildings, as is generally the case, are not well preserved, due to lack of properly tying or binding the courses of masonry. Much debris has accumulated in and around the kivas, filling their cavities; it is evident that these ceremonial rooms were formerly one-storied, and practically are subterranean on account of the height of surrounding rooms. Fragments of standing walls project out of the accumulated debris indicating rooms at the junction of the eastern and western sections of the ruin, but the form and arrangement of walls at that junction are not evident. The walls of one of the kivas show evidences of mural pilasters and banquettes like those of cliff dwellings.

The building that has given a name to the south fork of Ruin Canyon is the square tower that stands on a large angular rock below Hovenweep Castle. This remarkable example of prehistoric masonry is so situated that the outlook from the top is limited by cliffs on three sides.

There are numerous other ruins in this group, one of which is a small tower situated at the point of the mesa where the canyon bifurcates into the North and South Forks. A section of its wall still standing indicates a circular form, the north side of which has fallen; the part still intact, or that on the south side, exhibits good masonry about eight feet above the foundation. The walls of the north segment of a much dilapidated tower stand on a large angular block of stone in the bed of the canyon.

Eroded Boulder House is remarkable both from its site and its structure. Its front walls, occupying a cave worn in a boulder, have partly fallen halfway down the talus of the cliff, but the rear walls, built in the depth of the cave, still remain intact. On the top of the boulder are remains of fallen walls, suggesting the existence of a former tower. Where the walls are sheltered the clay mortar shows impressions of human hands or indentations made by a corncob used by the plasterers to press the mortar between the courses of stone. The eroded boulder formerly sheltered at least two rooms.

The so-called Twin Towers, seen together from certain points appearing as one ruin, rank among the most impressive buildings





in Square Tower Canyon. They stand on the canyon rim on the south side on a rock foundation isolated by a cleft from the adjoining cliff. The larger has an oval ground plan with evidences of a doorway in the southwest corner; the smaller has the shape of a horseshoe.

The ground plan of a ruin on the mesa rim near the Twin Towers is rectangular in form, measuring 19 feet 6 inches long by 10 feet wide; with walls standing 11 feet in altitude. The doorway in the middle of the north wall was protected by fallen walls, extending to the edge of the cliff. The masonry as a rule is rough; projecting ends of rafters indicate a building two stories high.

Another variety of ruin in this group is Unit-type House, a compact rectangular pueblo situated on the eastern rim of Square Tower Canyon. This is the simplest form of a unit type of pueblo, and is composed of a centrally placed circular ceremonial room surrounded by six secular rooms. The building was oriented nearly due north and south; its western wall, which formerly rose perpendicularly from the edge of the canyon, was much broken down and the component stones precipitated over the cliff.

The central kiva was constructed of exceptionally fine masonry, enough of the walls remaining to show an internal structure identical with cliff dwellings on the Mesa Verde. It formerly had a vaulted roof like those at Square Tower House.

Stronghold House is composed of a cluster of small rooms, one of which is situated on the north edge of the mesa somewhat east of that last mentioned; another was built on the sloping inaccessible top of an angular pinnacle of rock. Notwithstanding its mutilation enough remains to render it a most picturesque ruin. From below it resembles a square tower, but when viewed from the south it is seen to be composed of a series of connected rooms perched on an inaccessible rock.

The second of the three groups that compose the Hovenweep Monument is situated north of the first in Holly and Hackberry canyons. Its ruins either cluster about the heads of small canyons





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The most imposing ruin in this group is a great house, Hackberry Castle, which is rectangular in form, measuring 31 by 9 feet, and 20 feet high, standing on the edge of the canyon. Evidences of two rooms appear on the ground plan, one of which is 14 feet long, the other 12 feet, inside measurement. The partition separating the two rooms is not tied into the outer walls, an almost constant feature in ancient masonry. The ends of the rafters can still be seen in the wall at a level 12 feet above the base.

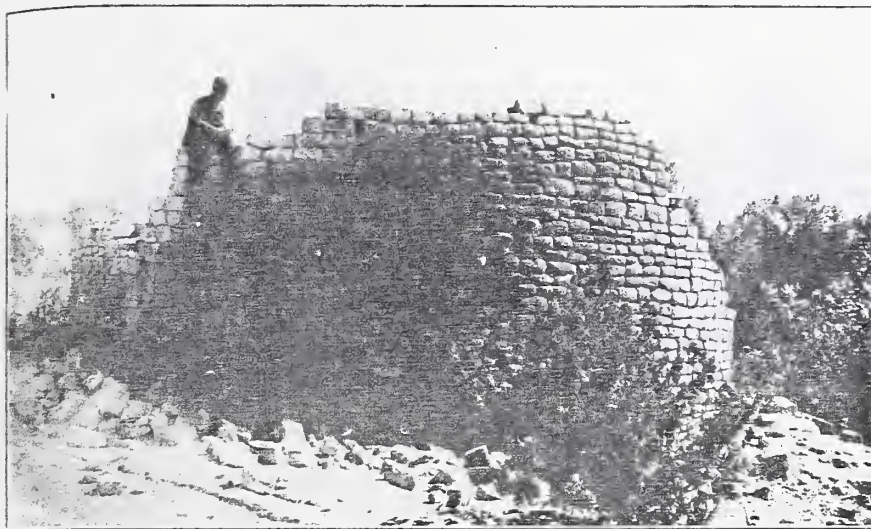


FIG. 38.—Horseshoe House, Hackberry group, Hovenweep National Monument.

A building with high, conspicuous walls situated a short distance north of the last mentioned also rises from the canyon rim. The section of standing walls indicates that the ruin was about square or of semicircular form. The entrance into this room may have been through the floor of the ground story.

There are in this group two or three towerlike buildings closely approximated which show some of the finest masonry known in this monument. One of the most conspicuous is a tower with two rooms, one narrower than the other, as if constructed at a different time. It measures 17 feet long by 8 feet





wide; the most conspicuous wall at the southeast corner is 12 feet 8 inches high. This ruin has a fine doorway, wide above and narrow below, in the north wall. The approach at present is difficult on account of the height of the rock on which it stands, and the evidences of a former trail appear in aboriginal footholes cut in the solid rock.

Horseshoe House, situated in Hackberry Canyon a mile northeast of the cluster in Holly Canyon, is particularly instructive from its semicircular shape enclosing the remains of a circular tower, with which it is connected by radial partitions.



FIG. 39.—Cool Spring House, Cajon group, Hovenweep National Monument.

Horseshoe House (Fig. 38) stands on the north edge of the canyon. Its south wall is straight, and the well-preserved north side curved. The southeastern corner formerly rested on a projecting rock, which recalls the cornerstone of Sun Temple. The masonry of most of the southern section of the enclosed circular room or tower has fallen down the cliff. While the form of Horseshoe Ruin recalls that of Sun Temple, its structure is widely divergent. The length of the south wall measures 30 feet; the width of the ruin 27 feet. The highest wall is on the northwest where it is 12 feet. The distance between the outer and inner concentric walls averages 4 feet; the central room measures 17

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feet in diameter remain well

The ruins are situated at about 10 miles west of the House on a hillside. This ruin features no

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<sup>3</sup> For further information see Smithsonian Miscellaneous Publications





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feet in diameter. In a cave below Horseshoe House there still  
remain well-preserved walls of a cliff dwelling.

The third group of ruins in the Hovenweep Monument is  
situated at the head of a small canyon on the Cajon Mesa a few  
miles west of those already described. To the largest ruin  
(Fig. 39) of this group, the author has given the name Cool Spring  
House on account of the fine drinking water in the canyon below  
it. This ruin would well repay extensive study and contains  
features not yet described in other ruins.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For further details cf. Bull. 70, Bureau of Amer. Ethnol and vol. 68, no. 1,  
Smithson. Misc. Colls, 1917.

